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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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**Alaska green infrastructure pilot projects prove successful
\$85,000 in stimulus funds jump start local efforts**

January 18, 2011– Alaska communities have successfully demonstrated that green infrastructure projects can work in Alaska to prevent water pollution thanks to grants supported by economic recovery funds.

The Alaska Departments of Environmental Conservation partnered with the Department of Natural Resources to quickly award \$85,000 in stimulus funds for green infrastructure grants. The two recipients were the cities of Soldotna and Fairbanks.

Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces like parking lots, buildings, and roads can pollute lakes, rivers and oceans. Green infrastructure mitigates the water pollution by infiltrating, evaporating, and reusing stormwater. Examples include green (vegetated) roofs, porous pavement, rain barrels, and vegetated swales.

In Soldotna the city partnered with the Kenai Watershed Forum to design and install a new parking lot in the Soldotna Creek Park using porous pavers. The porous parking lot decreases stormwater run-off to help protect water quality in nearby Soldotna Creek and the Kenai River. The city also mapped the stormwater system in a geographic information system that will allow the city to determine where future stormwater projects could have the most benefit.

In Fairbanks, the city awarded seven sub-grants to homeowners to construct green infrastructure on their property. Project partners, the Cold Climate Housing Research Center and GW Scientific created a resource guide based on the types of green infrastructure installed. It is available at: <http://www.cchrc.org/green-infrastructure>. The Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District conducted workshops and local demonstrations on the green infrastructure projects as part of an outreach program to show their benefits.

“We wanted communities to use these grants to evaluate whether green infrastructure projects would work in Alaska’s climate to reduce water pollution, said Lynn Kent, DEC’s water division director. “Clearly the cities did a lot with this small amount of grant money and the completed projects are a great step to protect water quality in our rivers and lakes.”

DEC and DNR worked together to get the money to the cities for the projects.

“We had a tight timeline on these grants and in less than a year have sent the final payments out to the cities, said Patricia Joyner, DNR’s community forestry program coordinator. “The funds employed people in each city and we are optimistic that these efforts will be the start of many more green infrastructure projects that will provide additional employment in Alaska, while improving the quality of life in communities.”



Robert Ruffner from the Kenai Watershed forum compacts the last layer of gravel on the GravelPave2 system for parking spots in front of the Soberg House in Soldotna Creek Park at the confluence of the creek and the Kenai River. The porous parking system is a green infrastructure grant project funded by stimulus funds.